

Older patients have higher expectations and are more satisfied with healthcare

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New research on patients' experiences of health services and how these relate to their expectations and satisfaction, published by the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, reveals that older people have higher expectations of their care and that they believe that their expectations are being met. The research questions prevailing stereotypes that characterise older patients as being satisfied with their care because their expectations are lower.

Patients visiting their GP and hospital outpatient departments were surveyed before and after their consultations. They were asked about their [experiences](#) of the [physical environment](#), finding their way around, communication with the doctor, the content of the consultation, the information given and the outcome of the consultation.

Ann Bowling, leading a research team from the University of Southampton and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical [Medicine](#), said that it is the ability of the NHS to meet patients' expectations in respect of the emotional and human features of the consultation, together with the clinical outcome, that matter most to people.

"Whether patients' expectations for healthcare were met determines how satisfied they will be with their consultations. We found that older patients' expectations were higher than those of younger patients, and they were also more likely to believe that they were being met."

The researchers also found that GPs' patients were more likely than

hospital patients overall to have higher expectations, and met expectations, for their healthcare.

The research, chiming with the finding that [satisfaction](#) with the NHS among the general public is now at an all-time high, has implications for health professionals, managers and politicians. "There is no room for complacency, given that the delivery of healthcare in England is undergoing profound and unprecedented change, with many services facing severe cuts," said Bowling and colleagues. "It will be essential for those who are delivering care in the midst of organisational and, frequently, personal turbulence, to remain focused on what matters most for patients, which means most of all effective communication, adequate information and good outcomes."

More information: Patients' experiences of their healthcare in relation to their expectations and satisfaction: a population study, by Ann Bowling, Gene Rowe and Martin McKee, *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*.

Provided by SAGE Publications

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